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For Immediate Release
2008ARR0014-000835
May 30, 2008

Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation

$1 MILLION STRENGTHENS NISGA'A ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

VICTORIA – The Province is providing $1 million over five years to the Nisga'a Nation to improve economic opportunities and create jobs in the Nass Valley, said Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Minister Michael de Jong.

"Treaties create opportunities for First Nations to develop their economies in new ways," said de Jong. "Since signing their final agreement, the Nisga'a have identified many exciting possibilities for development, from creating small, local businesses to selling to international markets. This investment will help make those ideas become a reality."

The funding will be used to develop community-based projects such as single or joint-venture initiatives, carry out feasibility needs assessments and studies, and consult with the community to make sure development is consistent with their needs. The Nisga'a Nation has identified tourism and resource management as two significant areas of opportunity for building their economy.

The funding will be provided in instalments of $200,000 per year until 2012. The first payment was provided in mid-May.

"We have always stated that we are for development of our lands and resources, provided development is carried out in an environmentally friendly manner," said President of the Nisga'a Lisims Government Nelson Leeson. "These funds will assist the Nisga'a Nation in participating in resource development and eco-tourism, and being well armed with information from studies and assessments of our resources to ensure proposed developments are environmentally friendly."

The Nisga'a Nation is governed by the Nisga'a Lisims Government, an elected body that brings together traditional cultural and modern practices to govern areas including health care, justice services, education and social development.

The Province is working with the Nisga'a to implement their final agreement, which provides certainty regarding land ownership and the authority for the Nisga'a to deliver services to their community and pass laws on a broad range of matters.

"Eight years ago, the Nisga'a settled their final agreement, establishing the first modern-day land claims agreement in B.C. They have achieved a great deal to date and the Province is committed to helping the Nisga'a implement the agreement to realize its full potential," said de Jong. "This new funding adds to our annual support of approximately $2 million to the Nisga'a Lisims Government for self-governance capacity-building."

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Since 2005, the Province has been building a new relationship with First Nations based on respect, recognition and reconciliation. Through treaties and other agreements with First Nations, the Province is committed to closing the socio-economic gap that separates Aboriginal people from other British Columbians.

For more information on the Nisga'a Final Agreement and the Nisga'a Lisims Government visit www.gov.bc.ca/arr/firstnation/nisgaa and www.nisgaalisims.ca.

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